

AFEHRI File 100.033

Research Materials/Source Documents
STUDENT PAPERS

FILE TITLE: Background Paper on the Development of Noncommissioned Officer Academies

AUTHOR: MSgt W. C. Brown, SNCOA Student, 15 Jul 1993

Reviewed by:

AFEHRI Representative *[Signature]* date 13 Dec 97

EPC Representative *[Signature]* date 16 Dec 97

Scanner Operator *[Signature]* date 16 Dec 97

APPROVED BY:

[Signature]

GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF

Director

Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute

72
19-11-7
B

BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER ACADEMIES

This paper discusses the origin and development of Non-Commissioned Officer Academies (NCOA) in the United States Air Force (USAF). It discusses the role of the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) during and after World War II. It further discusses the recognized need for NCO education. Additionally, it provides a historical review on the predecessors of NCO academies, establishment of the first recognized NCO academies, and early experiments with attendance criteria. Finally, this paper discusses the early NCOA objectives and courses of study versus the more modern day curriculum. Let's begin by looking at the changed role of the NCO.

The coming of age of the airplane in World War II signaled a change in the NCO corps within the Army Air Forces. In 1943, the Army Air Forces graduated some 91,500 new gunners and more than half a million technicians.(9:49) Literally overnight, hundreds of thousands of enlisted personnel were thrust into assignments requiring a certain degree of technical know-how. The rapid expansion of military aviation created heavy demands for senior enlisted people who could accept enlarged areas of responsibility. A new breed of NCO, spawned by rapid technical advances in a wartime situation, began to develop. (11:56) When World War II

MSgt Brown/CSA-13/93-D/6211/wcb/15 Jul 93

was over, most who served in the Army Air Forces went home. Those left became charter members of the United States Air Force. The Korean War emphasized the need for enlisted personnel to be trained as middle managers to handle an ever increasing range of responsibilities. Where the Old Army had used a few top noncoms to whip the troops into shape, the new Air Force discovered it could use thousands as supervisors and managers. (9:50-51) In a memo to the 14th Air Division on 26 February 1952, Colonel Richard Carmichael, Commander of the 14th Air Division, Travis AFB, California said "The increasingly complicated technical nature of USAF aircraft and equipment has accentuated a tendency to develop technical skill at the expense of sound leadership. We have deliberately placed emphasis upon the position and prestige of our highly skilled and minutely specialized individuals. At the same time, we have neglected the basic requirement for leadership ability and experience within the corps of our non-commissioned officers." (12:1) This premise seemed to be acknowledged throughout the Air Force as we see the recognition of a need to educate NCOs.

After World War II, it had been long recognized that the USAF was not obtaining full value from its non-commissioned officer in the matter of supervisory responsibility. (15:1) The enlisted force changed most dramatically on the ground. After years of thinking of them as little more than cheap, semi-skilled essential partners in an increasingly technical force. (9:51)

Elaborating on the value of training airmen to assume the responsibilities of NCOs, General T. Alan Bennett, 25th Air Division Commander, told his commanders, "We must reestablish the NCO to his proper status in military life. It is our job to train and develop more effectively his ability to utilize the resources available to him. We must look toward the proper control of people. The Air Force is expanding in size but not in personnel. Therefore, the NCO is our only link between executive and manager in the command structure of the Air Force." (19:12) With the manpower situation becoming more critical, and emphasis being placed on better utilization, there was a need to reacquaint the command and supervisory officers with the need to delegate responsibility and authority to the NCO to carry out the detailed management and supervision on the job, and the need to use the NCO to his full capacity in leadership rather than solely as a highly paid technician. Colonel James W. Tweitty, 20th Air Force, Hq 6351st ABW, wrote, "It is impossible to appreciate how little the average Air Force NCO knows about management of men, military courtesy, customs, drill, guard, and the many other subjects not directly related to his technical specialty. (16:2) Recognizing that the NCOs needed more than just their stripes to be effective leaders, the efforts of early NCO education can be traced back to 1948.

The 1946th Airlift Squadron established a Non-Commissioned Officers School in Germany in 1948. The course offered an

intensive training program with such subjects as: Military Law, Infantry Drill Regulations, Military Management, NCO Responsibilities to Officers and Airmen, and Applied Personnel Management. It stressed the importance of military discipline and the proper professional attitude of personnel within the military system. (13:115) The forerunner of today's modern NCOA can be traced back to 1950. General John K. Cannon, then Commander of USAFE, is credited with establishing the original school for NCOs in Wiesbaden, Germany. It was called the USAFE Academy of Leadership and Management. Its course of study was adapted from portions of the Senior Military Management Course and subjects offered by the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania. (11:57) The school closed, however, in March 1951. The Strategic Air Command (SAC) began a more sustained effort at providing academies for its NCOs. The credit for the first recognized NCO academy belongs to SAC's 7th Air Division.

The 7th Air Division NCO Academy at West Drayton AB, United Kingdom was established by the 3911th Air Base Group on 3 November 1952 for the top two grades of NCOs. (14:143) Since this was a new venture it took considerable time to get it under way. Visits were made to the 7th Army NCO Academy at Munich, Germany, and to the 32nd AAA Brigade NCO School at Brigstock Camp, United Kingdom to observe techniques of instruction, procure training aids, and screen and evaluate the curriculum. By October 1952, the planning phase was complete and enough material was on hand to

commence operation on a modest scale. The first class opened with a student body of 13 non-commissioned officers. (15:2) The staff of the academy consisted mainly of noncoms. The only officer slots were the commandant, director of training, and the military law instructor. The deputy director of training and ten other instructors were all in NCO grades.(1:2) Due to its immediate success, Major General John P. McConnell, Commander, 7th Air Division, directed that it be expanded to cover the entire 7th Air Division. (14:143)

Patterned after the NCO Academy pioneered by the 7th Air Division in England, SAC's stateside academies started to spring up. The 15th Air Force NCO Academy at March AFB, California opened on 29 March 1954. This academy was also patterned after the leadership and management course at Forbes AFB, Kansas which began operations on 21 September 1953. The 2nd Air Force NCO Academy at Barksdale, Louisiana opened on 2 April 1954. The 8th Air Force NCO Academy at Bergstrom AFB, Texas opened on 5 April 1954 and the first class consisted of sixty Master Sergeants. (2:9; 10:22; 17:54; 18:67) In order to be selected to attend the SAC NCO academies, each commander would select the best qualified NCO. The candidate had to be a Master Sergeant with a 7-level, supervise 3 or more personnel, and have 12 months retainability. Outstanding Technical Sergeants who were recommended by their Base Commander and approved by SAC Headquarters could also attend. (15:35) The 25th Air Division NCO Academy (Western Air

Defense Force) at McChord AFB, Washington opened on 3 May 1954. (3:15) The academy at McChord AFB differed significantly from the SAC NCO Academies. It differed in its criteria for students and in its administrative, instructory and supervisory personnel. The students held the grade of Airman First Class, instructors were all Master Sergeants and Technical Sergeants and not instructors by virtue of any formal training, and the Academy Commandant was an NCO. (20:15) Additional differences and experiments can be seen in early NCO academy attendance criteria.

In 1955, the 25th Air Division embarked upon admitting the first females to attend the NCO Academy. Some minor considerations such as living quarters, adjustments in curriculum and class humor without forfeiture of morale standards, eating arrangements, roll call, and transportation had to be settled prior to the first female attending the academy. (20:14-15) In 1957, the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) NCO Academy at Orlando AFB, FL. admitted their first five females. (5:36) In 1978, the ATC NCO Academy experimented with civilians attending their NCO Academy. Military and civilian students gained a better appreciation of each other's systems, although operating under different systems, they were all Air Force employees, supporting a common mission and solving many shared problems. The instructors and civilians attending felt that both the military and civilians students benefited from the experience of sharing relationships. (7:15-16) Although attendance criteria at the early NCOAs was

somewhat different, the objectives were fairly similar.

Early NCOA objectives included: acquainting NCOs with supervisory responsibilities, reinstating the NCO as a leader, equipping the NCO with the knowledge and techniques he must possess to execute these responsibilities, and finally, providing him with an approach to the solution of those problems encountered in leadership. (14:145) The mission of NCO academies, broadly stated, was to prepare students for more advanced leadership and management responsibilities. The methods utilized throughout each major command, however, were anything but standardized. A lot of the subject matter such as military law, supply, classification procedures, ground safety, etc. were outlined to meet command requirements rather than an attempt to be standardized throughout the Air Force. (15:6) Early curriculums ranged from 110 to 162 hours and from two weeks to four weeks in length. (14:146; 18:2) Early attempts at standardization can be seen through conferences held by the NCOA commandants.

In 1956, the first conference of NCO Academy Commandants was held at Orlando AFB, FL. The conference was held to discuss the proposed USAF regulation and standard curriculum governing NCO academies. (4:17) In 1965, a major step was taken when the basic USAF regulation on NCO academies was overhauled at an NCO academy conference. The regulation was changed to read "Non-commissioned Officer Professional Military Education." This departure from a narrow training viewpoint to the broader educational outlook

signified that the program had finally achieved a full measure of maturity. (11:60) One of the most important recommendations of the 1965 conference was the establishment of a requirement for an annual conference to review and recommend changes in the NCO academy program.

The curriculum of the NCO academies has changed over the years. In 1955, the Second Air Force NCO Academy described the course of study as including "ten hours of Military Management; twelve hours of Military Instructor Training; twenty-two hours of speech; ten hours of Problem Solving," out of a total of 265 hours. In 1958, the major subjects were world affairs, Air Force History, communicative skills, supervision and management, human relations and leadership, drill and ceremonies, military customs, courtesy and protocol, physical training and conditioning, training, and military justice. In 1976, the curriculum was built around four major areas: communicative skills, the military environment, military management, and electives. In 1990, the course of work at the NCOA included Air Force History, military justice, the code of conduct, national security, the role of the NCO manager, leadership and management for the manager, and substance abuse and human relations issues.(8:30) Early in 1993, the 18 current NCO academies received yet another change in the course of study. They began following a standardized curriculum under the auspices of Air University. The current curriculum focuses on supervision skills, effective communication through

writing and speaking, and military history and responsibilities. Under the new curriculum, the focus remained the same, but the approach to instruction changed and the material covered increased as the program was expanded from 5 weeks to 6 weeks. Instead of just delivering lectures, instructors will involve students more in the material through extensive role playing. (6:19)

This background paper has provided a review of the evolution of the USAF Non-Commissioned Officer Academies. It reviewed the changing role of the NCO from a highly specialized technician during World War II to his requirement to be both a leader and a manager after World War II. It discussed the recognized need, by senior Air Force leaders, to educate the NCO to be able to accept and employ his new supervisory responsibilities. It provided a review of the predecessors to the first recognized NCO Academy at West Drayton AB, United Kingdom. It also revealed some facts about the stateside NCO Academies patterned after SAC's 7th Air Division NCO Academy in England. It briefly looked at early attendance criteria and some experiments with admitting females and civilians. It reviewed the fairly similar objectives of each NCOA, the different methods utilized in presenting the curriculum, and early attempts at standardization. Finally, it presented a review of the early NCOA courses of study versus the more modern day curriculum. With the current reductions and reorganizations, the size and shape, and use of the enlisted force is

bound to change even more. Whatever happens, however, NCOs face a brighter future due to the early leaders who saw a need to educate and train our NCOs through establishment of the NCO Academies. The need to continually educate all personnel is paramount as the complexity of operations and management in the Air Force changes every day.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Air Force Times. 17 October 1953, p. 2.
2. Air Force Times. 20 March 1954, p. 9.
3. Air Force Times. 24 April 1954, p. 15.
4. Air Force Times. 22 September 1956, p. 17.
5. Air Force Times. 19 October 1957, p. 36.
6. Air Force Times. 28 September 1992, p. 19.
7. Air Training Command Noncommissioned Officer Academy History
1 January 1978 - 31 December 1978, K-228.4.
8. Bednarek, Janet R. "Not Soldiers-Airmen: The Development of
the USAF Enlisted Force." Air Power History, Vol 39
(Summer 1992), pp. 25-31.
9. Callander, Bruce D. "The Enlisted Airman." Air Force
Magazine, (August 1992), pp. 46-51.
10. 8th Air Force History. April 1954, K-DIV-42-HI.
11. Magee, Ernest M., "The Evolution of NCO Academies."
Air University Review, (September-October 1966),
pp. 56-61.
12. 9th Bombardment Wing History. March 1952, K-WG-9-HI Vol 1.
13. 1946th Airlift Squadron History. 20 June 1948 - 1 August
1949, 383-1-1946 A (R).
14. 7th Air Division History. July -December 1953,
K-DIV-7-HI Vol 1.
15. 7th Air Division History. July - December 1953,
K-DIV-7-HI Vol 1, Tab C.
16. 20th Air Force History. January - June 1954, K760.01 Vol 1.
17. 21st Air Division History. December 1953, K-DIV-21-HI.
18. 21st Air Division History. January 1954, K-DIV-21-HI.
19. 25th Air Division History. 1 January 1954 - 30 June 1954,
K-DIV-25-HI Vol 1.
20. 25th Air Division History. 1 January 1955 - 30 June 1955,
K-DIV-25-HI Vol 1.